

Service is ingrained in Mr. West's DNA—after college, he joined the Peace Corps, first as a volunteer in Cabo Verde teaching literature and English as a second language, and then as a recruiter tasked with inspiring the next generation to follow in his footsteps. Since commissioning as a Foreign Service Officer with the Department of State, he's served in our embassies in Uruguay and Nepal while also working on food security for refugees.

In his current role as the Human Rights Officer at our Embassy in Tirana, Mr. West was tapped to serve as the Afghan Relocation Lead, coordinating the arrival of our group of Afghan refugees. During that critical time, he was able to leverage the immense generosity and hospitality of the Albanian people in order to save Afghan scientists, journalists, activists, former government officials and their loved ones. No small feat—he successfully brought in multiple planes from multiple places all chartered by different non-government organizations.

As so many have noted, the approximately 2,200 Afghans who landed in Albania are more than evacuees—they are human lives who escape danger to life and limb. Thanks to the tireless work by Mr. West on behalf of these men, women, and children in need, they now have the possibility of looking to the future with hope. Along with the rest of the Tirana embassy team, Mr. West spent long hours alongside Ambassador Kim to ensure that everything would proceed smoothly. His attention to detail was second to none, and I am forever indebted to him for his effort.

Madam Speaker, I rise to honor Mr. Keith West for his willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty in our effort to evacuate Afghan allies from Kabul and support them in their new life. For his around-the-clock effort to assist a vulnerable group of Afghans, sight unseen, and his relentless work ethic which left no stone unturned to accomplish the mission, I submit these words—may they stand as a tribute to his dedicated service when the moment called for it most.

HONORING TOM BLEFKO

HON. LLOYD SMUCKER

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 7, 2021

Mr. SMUCKER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Tom Blefko of Lancaster, Pennsylvania for his work as the 2021 President of the Lancaster County Association of Realtors (LCAR). A graduate of Franklin and Marshall College, Tom got his start in the real estate industry in 1983 when he became a licensed realtor. From that point on, Tom quickly advanced in his career, taking on a number of new roles while closing countless real estate transactions along the way. All of the effort and hard work he put into his profession brought him to his current position as the Director of Operations for the North Pointe office of Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices, based in Lancaster, PA. Outside of this role, Tom uses his expertise and many years of experience to mentor others looking to get involved in the real estate business by working as an instructor at LCAR's Real Estate School.

We wish Tom all the best and thank him for his many years of service to the real estate industry in Pennsylvania's Eleventh District.

HONORING RICARDO PERRY AS IOWAN OF THE WEEK

HON. CYNTHIA AXNE

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 7, 2021

Mrs. AXNE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to ask the House of Representatives to join me in recognizing Laborers Local 177 Journeyman Ricardo Perry as Iowan of the Week. I am especially proud to recognize Ricardo, a recent graduate of the Iowa Laborers' Education and Training Fund Registered Apprenticeship Program, during the 2021 National Apprenticeship Week.

This annual observance offers Americans an opportunity to reflect on how Registered Apprenticeship Programs are critical for creating jobs, bolstering the economy, addressing workforce challenges, supporting communities, and providing equitable opportunities for men and women to succeed. Folks from different backgrounds and at different stages in their careers can engage in these programs to gain skills, make a career change, or get a competitive edge in their industry. Registered Apprenticeship Programs, in Iowa play a key role not only in filling our states talent pipeline, but also in helping keep families here as they establish roots in the areas where apprentices are working and learning their trade.

Ricardo Perry is a wonderful example of how a Registered Apprenticeship Program can benefit an individual, their industry, and the community where they settle. Ricardo recently graduated from the Iowa Laborers' Education and Training Fund Registered Apprenticeship Program to become a Journeyman. He went through a three-year journey of on-the-job work, training hours, and mentorship to become a Construction Craft Laborer.

The pathway for an apprentice can be grueling; no two days are the same, you're constantly presented with challenges, and standards and technology are ever-evolving. While the journey was difficult, Ricardo quickly earned a reputation as an extremely hard worker, skilled laborer, and uniquely positive presence. His colleagues knew him to excel in training and could always rely on him to look at the bright side of any challenge. Their respect and admiration for Ricardo is immediately apparent, and his work ethic, skill set, and strong Iowa values will no doubt benefit the greater Des Moines area for years to come.

There are many reasons I was proud to vote for the historic Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) earlier this month, one among them being the huge opportunity the bill provides for states like Iowa to train the workforces required to undertake initiatives like building out broadband infrastructure, repairing our roads and bridges, and much more. We're going to need more skilled workers than ever before, and robust Registered Apprenticeship Programs to adequately prepare them for the work at hand.

That's why I was grateful for the opportunity to host United States Secretary of Labor Marty Walsh in Iowa earlier this year. During his visit we met with brothers and sisters in labor, many of whom graduated from Registered Apprenticeship Programs, to hear about filling the jobs pipeline in our state. I was proud to show him the massive, new training facility for the

Missouri Valley Line Constructors Apprenticeship and Training Program in Indianola: a shining example of a multi-year, in-depth training program turning out quality linemen across the nation. These conversations helped elevate the amazing work organizations in Iowa are doing to train skilled workers through apprenticeship programs and help those individuals establish prosperous lives in our communities.

Madam Speaker, it is programs like the Iowa Laborers' Education & Training Fund Registered Apprenticeship Program and the efforts of Journeymen like Ricardo Perry that are going to help carry our state into the future. These trained professionals who have the knowledge and skills to safely, effectively improve upon and further build out Iowa's infrastructure will bring additional opportunities to our communities. I am grateful Ricardo has chosen to live and work in my district, and for his contributions to keep Iowa growing. It is my pleasure to name him, during this National Apprenticeship Week, Iowan of the Week.

HONORING NATHAN RAMIA

HON. ELISSA SLOTKIN

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 7, 2021

Ms. SLOTKIN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor a member of our team who was instrumental in the safe evacuation of Afghan allies and partners alike, Mr. Nathan Ramia.

Mr. Ramia lives and breathes service. Some would say it's ingrained in his DNA as a graduate of the United States Military Academy. But beyond his Army bona fides, Mr. Ramia's character stands out in his willingness to go above and beyond for a group of vulnerable refugees, sight unseen. He leveraged his network, a word used often but rarely with so much importance, to bring together individuals from all over the world to achieve a common mission.

But where Nathan's leadership truly stands out is over the course of a harrowing 24 hours when our convoy of buses attempted to make it past the airport gates. On a group text chain with all the bus drivers, Mr. Ramia relayed information, calmed nerves, and succeeded in keeping our flock together when immense pressure was on them to turn back. After multiple attempts, several scares, and a few strokes of luck, our group of Afghans made it through—a testament to Mr. Ramia's poise throughout the ordeal.

There is a definition of courage that comes to mind when one thinks of Mr. Ramia—grace under pressure. Undoubtedly he owes some of his courage to serving our country faithfully in uniform. But there is another, quieter source of Mr. Ramia's courage. It comes from the knowledge that his work made a difference in the lives of others. It comes from seeing the fruits of his labor in the lives still with us instead of lost to a chaotic evacuation. I—and the entire team—owe Mr. Ramia an enormous debt of gratitude for his actions and his commitment to his fellow man.

Madam Speaker, I rise to honor Mr. Nathan Ramia for his willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty in our effort to evacuate Afghan allies from Kabul and support them in their new life. For his resolve throughout the